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Virginia Department of Transportation Employee Newsletter

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Top level reorganization finalized

Effective July 1, a number of refinements to the organization of divisions under the agency chiefs become official. The position of chief of system operations, held by Connie Sorrell, will direct the Mobility Management, Security and Emergency Management, and Asset Management divisions.

In addition, the chief of planning and environment will oversee the Policy Office and become the primary liaison with the General Assembly. A reconfigured Management Services Division will report to that chief as well, and continue its focus on developing performance metrics for the entire organization.

The director of the Human Resources Division will report to the Commissioner and carry the working title of chief of human resources. In addition to human resources, that chief will oversee the Learning Center and the Civil Rights Division. The employment planning functions will move from management services to human resources. The Project Management Office, which focuses on project management skill development and sharing of best practices, will move from Management Services to the Learning Center.

The director of the Public Affairs Division will also carry the working title of chief of communications. The chief engineer for program development will become the chief engineer. The Construction Quality Improvement Program (CQIP) and Value Engineering programs will move from management services to the Scheduling and Contract Division.

The placement of the Employee Health and Safety Division, along with the contract claims function currently residing in management services, is yet to be determined.

News Briefs

Big milepost for Springfield work -- A mile-long, 100-foot-high flyover bridge at the Springfield Interchange project opened May 19, bringing welcome relief to motorists traveling from the Capital Beltway's inner loop (I-495 west) to I-95 south to Richmond. The new bridge will carry long-distance motorists over the Mixing Bowl and into the I-95 southbound lanes about a quarter-mile south of the interchange.

The bridge will significantly improve safety by eliminating the weaving and merging motorists now experience where I-95/395 and the Capital Beltway converge. The bridge cost about \$31 million to build, and about 20,000 vehicles a day are expected to cross it. The \$676 million Springfield Interchange project began in March 1999 and will be complete in 2007. It will carry more than 400,000 vehicles per day.

Latest on the budget -- VDOT financial executives anticipate having a budget of \$2.9 billion for fiscal year 2005. The budget for fiscal year 2004 was \$3.1 billion. Following the new program structure in the Governor's budget, construction management budgets have been combined with the administrative budgets. The various prorates that were difficult to anticipate for project managers have been directly funded, eliminating the prorating of indirect costs to construction and maintenance activities. The planning and environmental functions have been highlighted and given individual budgets for better planning and accountability. Additional consolidations and realignments have been made in the areas of training and computer services.

Final budget amounts will not be known until the Governor accepts the budget passed by the General Assembly later this month. The transportation budget, with funding for Mass Transit, Airport Trust Fund and Port Trust Fund, will be presented to the Commonwealth Transportation Board on June 17 for action.

Raise for state employees --The budget just passed by the General Assembly provides for a three-percent salary increase for state employees effective Nov. 25 and for a two-percent increase in the second year of the budget period.

New on-time completion goals set --Commissioner Philip Shucet set new, higher goals for completing construction projects in fiscal year 2005. Beginning July 1, project managers will aim to complete 60 percent of their construction projects and 70 percent of their maintenance projects by the contracted completion dates.

Community Emergency Response Team- A program to train VDOT employees as first responders during emergencies in the Central Office has its first 12 graduates following their completion of 27 hours of training on May 20. Known nationally as Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT), the program is a primary effort of the federal government to prepare citizens to react during disasters or acts of terrorism. At VDOT, the program is conducted by the department's Security and Emergency Management Division (SEMD). It is the first CERT to be trained on the East Coast.



Central Office employees form first VDOT Community Emergency Response Team. Pictured are (seated, from left) Sue Maddox-Toth, Jean Chewning, Gail Reynolds, Marlene Hampton, and Nick Hart; (standing, from left) Robert Hofrichter, Darryl Jones, Brian King, David Bailey, Jeff Patrick (Salem Res.), Bill Kane, Bill Callan, and Fred Washington.

The division's goal is to train four teams of 10 employees each in the Central Office, ensure the program is running well there, and then offer VDOT districts the opportunity to train teams in cooperation with SEMD.

Managed competition contractor chosen in Staunton District ---First Vehicle Services of Cincinnati was selected as the winner of a contract to provide vehicle maintenance in Luray and Lexington equipment shops in Staunton District following competition by private vendors and a team of VDOT employees who were working in those shops.

The contract originated in a pilot program, often referred to as "managed competition," which allows private firms and state employee groups to each make a proposal for operating a government enterprise. A panel of citizens and a legislator reviewed the proposals and made the final selection. The VDOT team was one of the final two competitors. The contract begins June 26.

Sixteen VDOT employees were affected, including fiscal assistants, mechanics, warehouse staff, and supervisors. A district management team from maintenance, equipment, residency, and human resources units identified alternate positions for the employees. All have been offered new positions within VDOT, but not necessarily in the same residency or district where they were assigned.

RUMS program makes money-- For the first time, VDOT is selling its intellectual property through software licensing agreements with other state transportation agencies. The Minnesota DOT is the first customer, paying \$125,000 for the rights to use and adapt the source code for VDOT's Right of Way and Utilities Management System (RUMS). Other states will pay \$250,000--10 percent of VDOT's cost to develop the system with a contractor. RUMS gives right of way managers an at-a-glance status of a highway project, including key deadlines to ensure right of way and utilities activities are completed on schedule. "This will change the way that all government agencies look at intellectual property," said Les Griggs, VDOT's right of way program manager. "Selling licensing agreements to a software system is a new practice for a state agency."

Work zone outreach intensified--When Commissioner Philip Shucet recently challenged VDOT employees to reach 10,000 young drivers with their work zone safety program in the next 12 months, he didn't know that employees were well on their way to that figure in presentations to driver's education classes. But his commitment, made in cooperation with a similar effort by the Virginia Road and Transportation Builders Association, intensifies the department's focus on reducing work zone crashes by students beginning their driving experience.

"Lots of employees are making presentations to high school students and are finding out how rewarding it is," comments David Rush, VDOT's state work zone safety coordinator. "If you're not yet involved, contact your VDOT public affairs office, and the staff there will supply a video, information kits, contacts with schools and information on local contractors who want to help with this."

For those already participating, Rush asks that they let their public affairs staff know where and when presentations are scheduled, and then afterward tell them how many students were reached. For a running total of the number of students involved, go to www.VirginiaDOT.org, click Programs and Information, and then click Work Zone Safety.

Names in the News

Varney is Petersburg engineer

Ray Varney, P.E., is the new resident engineer for the Petersburg Residency in the Richmond District. Currently, Varney is the assistant resident engineer at Ashland Residency where he oversees the Atlee-Elmont Interchange project.

In his new position, he will supervise and manage all aspects of transportation including road maintenance, new road construction and land development for Prince George and Dinwiddie counties. He also will assist the cities of Petersburg and Hopewell with their transportation needs. Varney is a graduate of Virginia Tech with a master's in civil engineering. He has been with VDOT for five years.

Toten leads Chesterfield Residency

Dale Totten, P.E., has been selected as the resident engineer for the Chesterfield Residency in the Richmond District. In addition to his duties as assistant resident engineer for land development at the residency, Totten has been serving as acting resident engineer.

In his new position, he will lead and manage the existing and future transportation infrastructure in Chesterfield and Powhatan counties. Totten is a graduate of Pennsylvania State University with a bachelor's in civil engineering. He has been with VDOT for almost a year.

Isley promoted in IT

Arthur Isley has been named director of the Information Technology Operations Division for an interim period. He moves up from the position of assistant division director for technical operations, and he succeeds Tom Bradshaw, who is now enterprise service level director at the Virginia Information Technologies Agency (VITA).

In his new role, Isley will be in charge of all IT operations infrastructure and approximately 215 employees in the districts and Central Office until July 1 when they will be transferred to VITA. At that time, Isley will become VITA on-site service level director for VDOT and a VITA employee. He will report to Tom Bradshaw and will be responsible for managing all VITA operations and employees that support IT for VDOT.

Elliott is promoted in HR

Emily S. Elliott has been named an assistant administrator in the Human Resources Division. She moves up from the position of manager for compensation and new initiatives in the division, which she had held since 2000. She succeeds Bobbie Hughes who retired.

Elliott will have responsibility for the following areas: employment classification, compensation, benefits, recognition, and field service operations to assist human resources staff across the state and as well as in Central Office.

She has an undergraduate degree in business administration from Christopher Newport University and a graduate degree in education and human development from George Washington University. She also is certified as a compensation and human resources professional.

Vdoter in Profile

Kenny Robinson's avocation as speaker, actor...

Aunt Lilly started it all

Most of us have seen those television shows about how actors, writers or athletes got their start in "the business." Kenny Robinson, assistant resident engineer for the Bristol District's Wise Residency, has a similar story, one that continues today as he uses his talents to act in regional theater and speak at VDOT training events.

From early boyhood, he remembers telling stories and performing to make his family laugh. Impressions of his Aunt Lilly were always a big hit.

"Aunt Lilly was a mountain woman who could smoke and dip snuff simultaneously," Robinson recalls. "Every time she left our home, I would immediately head to my mom's room to put on a dress, coat and hat so I could mimic Aunt Lilly."

VDOTer in PROFILE

Kenny Robinson

Assistant resident engineer, Wise

But instead of taking his Aunt Lilly act on the road, Robinson, began working on the roads for VDOT. After nine years with the Bristol District survey party, Robinson became a draftsman, then survey coordinator, construction inspector, assistant district maintenance engineer, and in

1998, assistant resident engineer. All the while, his performing instincts have energized his 26-year career. Making others laugh while motivating them in their jobs is the payoff for him.



Kenny Robinson



Robinson in the "Trail of the Lonesome Pine."

VDOT employees got to know Robinson statewide from his motivational speaking engagements beginning in 1999. His first topic was "How to Bridge the Gaps in Our Values Statements," a theme still evident as he teaches employees with his ample humor. "The best compliment I received was from an employee in the Northern Virginia District," Robinson notes. "He told me he was on vacation but came to the event just to hear me speak."

Motivating VDOT employees is rewarding to him, but he needed something extracurricular to satisfy the acting bug. In 2002, Robinson and his wife, Terry, won tickets to see the play "Trail of the Lonesome Pine," the official state outdoor drama of Virginia performed each summer in Big Stone Gap. After the show ended, Robinson told his wife that next year he wanted to play Red Fox Taylor, the town's sneaky mountain man always close by when trouble surfaces. He tried out last spring and was selected to play the part during the drama's 40th anniversary this summer. Next year he will play Devil Judd Toliver, the father of one of the main characters.

Family keeps Robinson busy, and we would guess youthful, too, with four children: Caleb, a sophomore in college; Kendra, about to be a college freshman; Callie, a ninth-grader; and Meagan, an eighth-grader. He is active in his home church in Wise, too, and in another in Big Stone Gap where his wife, Terry, is sign language interpreter. Retirement's not anytime soon, but Robinson has goals for life after VDOT. They include stand-up comedy (he has CD's and DVD's to help him study the comedian's trade); performing in other regional dramas; part-time sports writing (he's a guest columnist for the Coalfield Progress and the Big Stone Gap Post); and becoming a deejay for a country radio station.

After a quick reality check, Robinson quips, "I only need two more lifetimes to get this stuff done."--By Michelle Earl

All in the Family

Bristol District

Materials Section: Manager Steven Mullins and his staff recently completed the AASHTO Accreditation Program for Materials Labs. Special recognition goes to Charlene Phelps, materials lab supervisor, and to technicians Brian Cole, Lawrence Keith and Robbie Cardwell for leading this effort. The accreditation recognizes the lab's competency to perform specific tests on construction materials. So far, Culpeper, Hampton Roads, Salem and Bristol district labs have received this accreditation.

Location and Design Section: Congratulations to Tamara Pritchard, district drainage engineer, and her husband, Trigg, on the birth of a son, Rogan Bryce Leonard.

Jonesville Residency: W.P. Salyer, resident engineer, retires June 30 with 48 years of VDOT service. He leaves with this thought: "Throughout the years it has been an honor and a pleasure to work with so many fine VDOT employees.

As I look back, our accomplishments are many and great. I know VDOT will continue to lead the country in transportation initiatives." Thanks for all of your contributions, too, Mr. Salyer, and best wishes on your retirement!

Lebanon Residency: Elizabeth Shortt, office services specialist, Lebanon, and her husband, John, are the proud parents of a new son, Jonathan Isaac.

Central Office

Financial Planning: Dan Hinderliter, budget director, and his wife, Sara, are enjoying a new daughter, Natalie Clare, born May 13.

IT Applications: VDOT's Data Warehouse is becoming increasingly recognized around the country. Recently eight U.S. State Department employees visited VDOT's Data Administration Section. The staff demonstrated its Enterprise Metadata Repository for the federal employees, who have been working for years on an effective data program. The State Department recognized VDOT's expertise last year when Richard (Dick) Jones from VDOT's IT team presented a paper on data management at the Computer Associates World Conference.

Public Affairs: Sande Fulk has won a first-place award from the Virginia Press Women Communications Contest. The award was given for her "How Virginians Move" series on VDOT's Web site. She also won a second-place award for a press kit promoting the Brook Run documentary, "Discovering the First Virginians."

Culpeper District

Golden Shovel awards have been presented to George T. (Tim) Gray, construction inspector, and Clyde M. Hoffman Jr., survey engineering technician. The awards are given to employees who exemplify the VDOT values and consistently perform at an exceptional level of service. Nominations are submitted by fellow employees. The Civil Rights Section welcomes Yvonne Powers as its new manager. She moves from the Central Office Human Resources Section.

Fredericksburg District

District employees showed their family spirit recently after the home of their coworker, Sharon Morgan, burned down. Morgan, admin. specialist in the Right of Way Section, and her husband have several children, one of them disabled. Employees donated household items and clothing and raised \$2,150 for the family.

Lynchburg District

District Office Fiscal Section: Congratulations to Reginald Barthelemy on obtaining his master's degree in business administration from Averett University and to two graduates of Central Virginia Community College: Claire Rao, who earned an associate's degree in management, and Ellen Rice, Equipment Shop, on earning an associate's degree in administrative support technology. All three used Learning Partnership funds.

Location and Design Section: Congratulations to Laura Walton, hydraulics technician, and Norm Walton, construction assistant, on the birth of their daughter, Reagan Glyn.

Hampton Roads District

Andre Watson, a traffic control supervisor at the Monitor-Merrimac Memorial Bridge Tunnel, is the 2004 Employee of the Year. The 25-year, second-generation tunnel employee demonstrates "leadership and exemplary performance, even throughout times of hardship," according to his supervisor, Mike Dangerfield. That excellence was noted during Hurricane Isabel, when he logged more than 25 hours in overtime to help maintain the tunnel when coworkers were unable to assume their posts. "Andre is the consummate supervisor that every manager dreams of having on their team," says Dangerfield.

Accomac Residency: Chris Isdell is the new maintenance operations manager. He was most recently a maintenance superintendent at Croaker AHQ in Williamsburg Residency.

District Office Administration Section: William E. Young, finance and accounting manager, recently passed the exam to become a certified fraud examiner (CFE). He is the only District Finance & Accounting Manager in the state to hold this certification. Karen Evans, financial services specialist, received an associates degree in business management from Paul D. Camp Community College. Debbi Riggins, administrative services manager, and Billy Riggins, drill crew technician, Materials Section, welcomed a new son to their family recently, Dillan Blake. Blake is also the grandson of Randy Bailey, retired, and Betty Bailey, district project engineer, Construction Section.

Civil Rights Section: Salina Powell-Artis, program support technician, has graduated from Paul D. Camp Community College with an associate's degree in arts and science.

Construction Section: Congratulations to Elena Ottey, executive secretary senior, on receiving her bachelor's degree in business from Averett University. Paul Blanchard, engineer senior, is the proud grandfather of a recently arrived granddaughter, Emma Paige Blanchard.



Fredericksburg District Administrator David Ogle keeps his promise -- to cook "all the hotdogs you can eat." The chef treated district complex employees to the feast in celebration of Virginia Public Service Week. "Everyone went away full and happy," according to a reliable source.

Maintenance and Operations Section: Paul "Pete" Morrisette, contract administrator, received a bachelor's degree in business from Averett University. He was nominated by Averett faculty for the Pinnacle National Honorary Society because of his excellent grades and contributions to the university and its community.

Information Technology: Nicole Chapman, IT team member, and Johnny Dale are the happy parents of new arrival Hunter Ray Dale. Congratulations!

Planning Section: Congratulations to Regina Moore who recently received her master's degree in Transportation Policy Operations and Logistics (TPOL) from George Mason University.

Public Affairs Section: Congratulations to Monica Lea, public relations and marketing specialist, who recently graduated with a bachelor of arts in communication-English from Old Dominion University.

Northern Virginia District

American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) has awarded two of its awards for 2003-2004 to the Northern Virginia District.

The AASHTO Pathfinder awards in the Team Excellence Program went to the district's CURE Team (for "constructability and utility relocation engineering"). The team was formed to reduce cost increases and delays in construction projects. The team addressed utility relocation accuracy and plan quality with constructability and bid-ability reviews on all projects. Cost savings have topped \$5.7 million, and cost avoidance figures are more than \$4.7 million. The team comprises the Utility Relocation Section of Matthew McLaughlin, Shea Ridings, Rodney McWhorter, Jake Robinson, Bob Caston, Leslie Durham, John Meyers, and Jason Fiel; and the Constructibility Section of Roger Foster, Larry Tomlinson and Mike Shaw.

The AASHTO Trail Blazer Award was made to the Northern Virginia Regional Bikeway and Trail Network Study Team. The Northern Virginia Transportation Planning Section in collaboration with Fairfax, Loudoun, Prince William and Arlington counties and the incorporated cities and towns in the region produced a plan for a network of bikeways and paths that, when implemented, would provide commuters and visitors the option of leaving their cars behind and walking or bicycling throughout the area, from Loudoun County into the District of Columbia. Fatemeh Allahdoust, senior transportation planner, reports that "VDOT continues to receive many positive remarks and support for the study." Key VDOT staff on the team were Jo Anne Sorenson, Helen Cuervo, Tom Fahrney, William Harrell and John Huston.

Ken Wester, assistant district administrator, is leaving VDOT to join the Appalachian Regional Commission as Appalachian Development Highway System program manager. Wester began his career with VDOT in 1972 as an engineer trainee.

Richmond District

Amelia Residency: Congratulations to the new parents--Brian Currin, supervisor at Victoria AHQ, and wife, Elizabeth, on the birth of a son, Jacob; and Michael Daniel, equipment operator at Victoria AHQ, and his wife, Janine, on the birth of a daughter, Autumn Rose.

Chesterfield Residency: Debbie Bell, fiscal assistant, was named Administrative Support Person of the Year for the district in competition involving 13 administrative professionals nominated by their coworkers and supervisors. Congratulations!

Salem District

District Office Bridge Section: Todd Marshall, structural engineer, was awarded a "District Construction Award" at the Annual District Construction Inspector's Conference for exceptional support to the construction program.

Congratulations to David Smith, bridge inspector, and his wife, Christy, on the birth of a little girl, Kayla Marie.

Staunton District

Edinburg Residency: Timothy Rhodes has been promoted from transportation operator II at Mount Jackson AHQ to transportation operations manager I at the residency sign shop.

Harrisonburg Residency: Jeremy S. Mason has been promoted from eng. tech. II to eng. tech. III.

Best Practices

Through teleconferencing -- Going the distance without traveling it!

Teleconferencing is changing VDOT's way of doing business. That's true internally in the conduct of staff meetings, and externally in communications with the public. The number of video and audio conferences continues to grow, and substantial benefits are already being realized.

For years, the VDOT paradigm had been traveling from the many corners of the state, meeting, and then backtracking home, but the time and money demanded by this practice loomed larger every year. Tight budgets regularly spotlighted these expenses. Also, frequent trips from districts had penalized the time and pressed on the calendars of managers. In the case of Bristol District, a meeting in Central Office would require almost six hours of travel each way and an overnight stay for a meeting that might last four hours or less.

In the past year, **teleconferencing has eliminated much of the costs of driving**, eating, lodging, and driving home again, and the extent of teleconferencing within the agency might surprise employees. In the fiscal year just ended, 633 teleconferences were held, encompassing 1,714 hours of meetings.



A video teleconference in progress, showing participants in Central Office.

Despite the new arrival of this technology at VDOT, the cost-benefit analysis is already impressive. Over the last three years, VDOT has invested about \$600,000; but in the last year alone, the department has saved more than \$2.8 million in expenses, including time-savings in terms of salaries. While audio conferences incur telephone charges and bridge support costs, video conferences result in no costs unless connections are made to persons not attached to the VDOT data network.

Three regular teleconferences led by Commissioner Philip Shucet--the monthly Dashboard and Project Advertisement meetings and weekly district administrators' conferences--are prominent in these statistics. In addition, last December, Commissioner Philip Shucet used teleconferencing to communicate a "state of the department" message to hundreds of employees gathered at sites in the nine districts. He plans to do it again in late June.

This technology also is making access to public meetings much easier for citizens, while saving time for public officials who can stay in one location and communicate with people in all of the nine transportation districts at once. A hearing on the I-81 corridor improvement program was offered by VDOT at four sites in February. Then, this spring, hearings on the draft Six-Year Improvement Program were teleconferenced to 10 sites so that citizens across the state could participate at the same time. This was a big improvement from the earlier mode in which the final hearings were held in only two locations, sometimes on the same day. Those meetings required transportation officials and citizens to travel far--an inconvenience that probably limited public participation. During and after this spring's video-teleconferenced hearings, VDOT and the Commonwealth Transportation Board were praised for using technology to allow more people to have a voice in the program's development.

Meanwhile, **Bristol District has begun weekly district-wide video teleconferences** where residencies are equipped with the latest in video equipment. Staff are using the equipment for other meetings, too, saving time and travel. Karl Reedy, Bristol District business administrator, is enthusiastic about this capability for quick, convenient collaboration. "Video teleconferencing should be the first consideration--not an alternative way of holding meetings," he says. He also notes the collateral benefits: fewer vehicles on the road and less pollution, fewer risks of injury or death in traffic, and more time at home as well as at work.

Other districts are moving in the same direction. Several are holding "point-to-point" video teleconferences, in which an employee with a video camera and a computer communicates with a distant coworker equipped identically. The video component offers better conferencing when participants want to view the interactions and reactions of employees at the distant sites. Teambuilding between distant points is facilitated by pictures, as well as words, of coworkers. Data and charts also can be shared easily in this medium. A district can facilitate a teleconference for up to four "points" without the assistance of the department's IT professionals. So far, there are about 150 small cameras distributed at desks throughout the department, according to Ken Ruhf, IT enterprise network engineer. The cost of equipment for videoconferencing at an employee's desk ranges from \$75 and \$300, a modest investment for a new world of communications.

What's expected in the future? Additional benefits from teleconferencing are on the horizon. For example, more training will be available, such as the transportation master's degree program from George Mason University, which

has been conducted in video teleconferences for VDOT employees for several years. (VDOT also has allowed the Montana and Colorado DOTs and the U.S. Marine Corps to tie into the hookup for the program.) Employment interviewing by video teleconference also will grow in popularity, and staff meetings routinely will be held via teleconferencing. In the long-run, more VDOT employees will be accustomed to doing business long-distance.

Tech-Bytes

VDOT adopts European mixture 'Stone-matrix' pavement may last 15 years

Battered by weather and increasing traffic loads, asphalt concrete pavements throughout the nation were wearing out much sooner than expected, so the Federal Highway Administration in the late 1980s and early 1990s invested funds for the development of what is now known as Superpave. Short for Superior Performing Asphalt Pavements, Superpave, was touted as a new way to design asphalt mixes and predict future performance.

For most pavements around the country it was the best solution at the time, but VDOT's Materials Division is now using what it believes is an even better asphalt material - Stone Matrix Asphalt (SMA). It is a highly modified hot mix asphalt pavement mixture that has been used in Europe for years, and which the department began using in the mid-1990s. While 450,000 tons of SMA had been applied to state highways through 2002, usage increased dramatically in 2003 when the department placed 200,000 tons of the mixture on Virginia roadways.



Mike Nichols, engineering tech. IV, mixes Stone Matrix Asphalt for testing in the Materials Lab

"SMA is a highly modified form of a conventional mix. It's like going from a Krispy Kreme glazed donut to one with filling," said Trenton Clark, pavement program engineer. "We've added to it to make it better."

SMA costs about \$10 more per ton than conventional or Superpave mixture which costs about \$41 per ton, but it also lasts much longer. The department is hoping SMA paved roads last 15 years before they need to be repaved. Superpave is a design system for base, intermediate and surface layers for asphalt pavement. SMA is a variation of the intermediate and surface layers found in the Superpave system.

With SMA, there is tighter control of aggregate particle shape and gradation, and the system uses a higher percentage of asphalt binder than does Superpave. Typically, cellulose fiber is used to hold the additional asphalt, and mineral filler is added to create the mortar that gives the mixture durability.

"SMA is a mixture that contains approximately 75 percent coarse aggregate, which forms a stone skeleton. The air void spaces in this stone skeleton are then filled with an asphalt mortar (asphalt binder and mineral filler)," said Mike Wells, asphalt program manager.

Portions of I-295 are paved with SMA, as are parts of I-95, I-66, I-64 and I-81. The mixture has been used in every district except Bristol.

"We want to use SMA on all interstates and for higher volume primary roads," Clark said. "It stays smoother longer, yet maintains its frictional properties. Maryland has documented that they have had very few potholes on roads where SMA mixes were placed. To date, our experience has been the same."

Because it lasts so much longer, SMA offers several other benefits. It alleviates inconvenience to the public because repaving is less frequent; there is less exposure for workers and the public to work zone dangers; and there are fewer administrative costs required for setting up and administering contracts.

Virginia is not the first state to pursue the use of SMA. Nearby states Maryland and Georgia have used it successfully since the 1990s, replacing few stretches of roadway. However, Wells said VDOT is following the European-style more closely than other states have done.

"We've had two scanning tours to Germany, and really paid attention to the European style of paving and how they use SMA," Wells said. "We're taking our cues from the Germans. They are using smaller and finer aggregate stones, and we are following their lead. They've been using this method for 36 years, and we are learning from their experience."-By Sande Snead Fulk

Living Our Values

Citizens often express their gratitude for the service, and sometimes the sacrifice, that VDOT employees make for them. Employees also commend their coworkers for excellent customer service. Here is a sampling of the letters, e-mails, and calls that come in appreciation of the good jobs VDOTers do.

VDOT employees can take pride in this comment from an out-of-state motorist who notices a "dramatic improvement" in the highways when she crosses into Virginia: "Well-kept roads really improve the quality of the natural beauty of the area and provide for a pleasant driving experience....Please continue to do the excellent work you do. Always know that your wonderful work is not taken for granted."

Check AHQ, Hillsville Residency, received a thank-you back in the winter, which we don't want to overlook. The writer, a single woman who commuted daily to Roanoke from her rural home during a major snow, said that VDOT trucks were "a constant presence on the road during and after the storm." She adds, "I felt confident because of VDOT. Not only did I get to my job every day but was able to work overtime knowing that the roads would be safe, day or night."

Monitor Merrimac Memorial Bridge Tunnel employee Mark Rogers, received a letter of recognition from Paul Szatkowski, Transportation Protective Security Agency, for his help in conducting risk assessments and possible countermeasures in the event of a terrorist attack on either the MMBT or the Route 17 James River Bridge. Rogers, acting electrician supervisor senior, worked closely with Randy Francis of VDOT's Security and Emergency Management Division. They gave Szatkowski valuable assistance in developing a Buffer Zone Protection Plan for the Route 17 James River Bridge. The information will be valuable to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security for "hardening" some of the nation's critical infrastructures.

Salem District team members responded well recently, when an equipment operator from the Airport AHQ slid down a 30-foot embankment on his tractor, rolled and landed in a stream. Salem Residency, district equipment shop and district environmental staff pulled together quickly with the area headquarters to render aid, including Darryl Abshire, Fred Craft, Lee Foley, Mike Jones, Bill Manning, Mike Scott, Kenny Sigmon, Travis Slusser, Shelia Updike, and David Wilson. Fortunately, the operator was wearing his seatbelt and received only minor injuries.

Richmond District's Diversity Management Team hosted a job-shadowing program recently so students could gain first-hand knowledge of transportation processes. Some said they had developed a new-found career interest in the field. In another event, Tommy Todd, Civil Rights Section, Debbie Wells, Human Resources Section, and Kathryn Horne, Right of Way Section, visited students at Matoaca High School in Chesterfield County to give them information on scholarships and internships. The event ended with a pizza lunch during which VDOTers and students had a chance to talk in more detail about opportunities.

Franklin AHQ's Benny W. Necessary earned praise from a Franklin resident for responding quickly to her questions about ditching and signage on Route 687 in Southampton County. She writes that he "has been quite helpful on a regular basis in any problems or questions."

50 Years Ago

Instant messaging-1950s style

E-mail and telephones are not the only forms of instant communication that have been employed by the department over the years. The May 1954 Bulletin details how two-way radio became an important medium, beginning in 1948 when radios were installed in Salem district and residency offices.

Observing Salem District's success, the department decided in 1949 to place two-way radios "over the entire state to facilitate maintenance work and speed up the relief of highway emergencies." The article describes the progress this way:

"With the installation of new and more powerful equipment in the Central Office, nearly all the highway districts and residencies may now contact the Central Office by radio. The hookup includes a set in the public information office and one in the maintenance division, both of which operate through the repeater station at the Richmond District office..."

The article reported that in 1954 the department had 209 radio sets in operation, including five repeater stations, fixed stations and mobile units. Weather permitting, the Central Office was within reach of radio transmissions from most of the state. Lacking was a repeater station in Hampton, and the department was anticipating Federal Communications Commission approval of that. With that addition, personnel expected to have "very good statewide coverage with the exception of a few blind spots."

Answer File

Question:

Who was the first woman to work for the Virginia Department of Highways?

Answer: Beginning work in 1908 in Richmond, Miss Bessie Atkins was the department's first female employee. She joined the department before it was officially a department, when it was called the State Highway Commission.

Miss Atkins began work Feb. 3 as a stenographer making \$50 per month. Mr. C. S. Mullen, who joined the commission in 1908 shortly after Miss Atkins did, recalled in 1954 at his retirement as chief engineer the day he went to the commission to apply for a job. He remembered well the people working in the one-room office, including "an attractive blonde behind the typewriter." We assume that was Miss Atkins, the only female employee at the time. We also suspect that the normally circumspect chief engineer was feeling a bit giddy upon the occasion of his retirement. Before computerization, VDOT kept up with its employees' progress on "roster cards," or large index cards. One of those cards tells Miss Atkins' story. In 1912, Miss Atkins was promoted to chief clerk at a \$100 per month. By 1922, her salary had doubled again--but it remained about the same into the Great Depression. During that trying period, her salary was cut 10 percent in 1932 and 10 percent more in 1933, as were most state salaries. Her salary was restored to 90 percent of its original amount in 1934, and by 1936 it was back to the pre-Depression level.

Her career progressed, and she was promoted to junior accountant and then accountant executive VI. Later she had the title of clerk D. She retired July 14, 1950, although she worked several weeks in a part-time capacity that fall. She died Dec. 10, 1967. The Department of Highways listed her birth year as 1875. Her commitment to her job and her constancy in it are evident, and her unique place in the department's history is secure.



Bessie Atkins, the department's first woman employee, presents employment certificate to Location and Design Engineer A.H. Bell upon his retirement

Obituaries

William H. Hylton, 73, maint. helper, Hillsville Residency, died May 15; retired in 1991 with 11 years of service.

Thomas H. Lahey, 39, eng. tech. II, Amherst Residency, died May 15; he had 6 years of service.

William L. Mankins, 90, equip. oper. B, Martinsville Residency, died May 21; retired in 1976 with 21 years of service.

Glen E. Mays, 67, equip. oper. B, Amherst Residency, died March 11; retired in 1993 with 20 years of service.

Frank C. Pulley Sr., 70, bridge tender, Kings Highway Bridge, Hampton Roads District, died Jan. 15; retired in 1993 with seven years of service.

Richard E. Warfe, 62, transp. oper. II, Chatham Residency, died April 18; retired in 2003 with 32 years of service.

Alvin C. Williams, 68, crew leader, Amelia Residency, died Feb. 20; retired in 1999 with 37 years of service.

Retirements

Bobby H. Anderson, equip. repair tech. I, Edinburg Residency, 40 years.

Rodney O. Baker, transp. oper. II, Petersburg Residency, 14 years.

Gloria A. Blackwell, admin-office spec. II, Materials Division, 25 years.

J. G. Chernault, oper. mgr. II, Dillwyn Residency, 39 years.

David R. Coleman, eng. tech. II, Sandston Residency, 6 years.

Harold L. Cutter Jr., repair tech. I, Richmond District, 19 years.

Dennis L. Davis, transp. oper. II, Charlottesville Residency, 10 years.

J. M. Dodson, watercraft oper. I, Warsaw Residency, 40

Joyce P. Perrot, eng. tech. III, Northern Virginia District, 14 years.

Richard M. Rush, transp. oper. II, Charlottesville Residency, 34 years.

Raymond F. Shaffer, watercraft oper. mgr. II, Hampton Roads District, 15 years.

Ralph S. Simmons, eng. tech. III, Luray Residency, 40 years.

William B. Smith, oper. mgr. I, Verona Residency, 31 years.

Mary C. Soaper, admin-office spec. III, Northern Virginia District, 26 years.

Dennis W. Stout, transp. oper. mgr. I, Petersburg Residency, 33 years.

D.M. Wigglesworth, eng. tech. III, Fredericksburg District,

years.
William A. Dovel Jr., oper. mgr. II, Luray Residency, 33 years.
Charles E. Gentry, oper. mgr. II, Abingdon Residency, 21 years.
Don P. Griffin, arch.-eng. mgr. I, Bristol District, 36 years.
Wilson J. Hartless, oper. mgr. I, Amherst Residency, 18 years.
Drewry R. Hudson, transp. oper. II, Halifax Residency, 26 years.
D. W. McConnell, transp. oper. mgr. II, Salem Residency, 39 years.
D. W. Milby, transp. oper. II, Saluda Residency, 33 years.
C. C. Mitchell, transp. oper. II, Verona Residency, 40 years.
Richard S. Nuckols Jr., transp. oper. II, Lexington Residency, 15 years.
Irvin L. Painter, eng.tech. III, Luray Residency, 42 years.

42 years.
Earl M. Williams, trans. oper. II, Martinsville Residency, 26 years.
Ricky D. Wilson, transp. oper. II, Petersburg Residency, 28 years.
Rosemary W. Womack, eng. tech. III, Lynchburg District, 30 years.
Douglas F. Wright, equip. repair tech. I, Northern Virginia District, 37 years.
Norman Wright, transp. oper. II, Fairfax Residency, 14 years.
Kenneth D. Wright, transp. oper. II, Staunton District, 15 years.

Correction: Last edition credited retiree Betty Winfree with 20 years of service. That should be 30 years.



Humor — *It's always close to the centerline (the heart) of VDOT*

A citizen, we assume one high on the social register, called the Northern Virginia District Office recently to say she had concerns about the appearance of her neighborhood street. She asked if it were possible "to send a paving crew out to repave the street before her dinner guests arrived that evening....?" As the staffer who took the call said later, "Only in Northern Virginia!"

About the bulletin

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